

Report of a Planning Workshop on a National Innovation Platform on Land and Water Management in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, April 8, 2011



Nile Basin Development Challenge

The Nile Basin Development Challenge (NBDC) is funded by the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF). It aims to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods in the Ethiopian highlands through a landscape approach to rainwater management. It comprises five linked projects examining: 1) Learning from the past; 2) developing integrated rainwater management strategies; 3) targeting and scaling out of rainwater management innovations; 4) assessing and anticipating the consequences of innovation in rainwater management systems; and 5) catalyzing platforms for learning, communication and coordination across the projects.

The NBDC is implemented by a consortium comprising the International Livestock Research Institute, International Water Management Institute, World Agroforestry Centre, Overseas Development Institute, Nile Basin Initiative, Stockholm Environment Institute, Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute, Catholic Relief Services – Ethiopia, Oromia Regional Research Institute, Amhara Agricultural Research Institute, Bahir Dar University, Ambo University, Nekemte University, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Water and Energy. More information: <http://www.nilebdc.org>

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Executive summary

Water scarcity is becoming one of the major obstacles for achieving food security and economic growth in the Nile Basin countries, threatening livelihoods and ecological systems. It has been the center of discussion for both politicians and academic institutions. The Nile Basin Development Challenge (NBDC) was initiated in 2010 as one of the six priority areas of Global Challenge Program for Water and Food (CPWF); it aims to improve rainwater management in the Ethiopian highlands of the Blue Nile basin – taking account of upstream/downstream relationships and cross-sector collaborations, to improve ecosystems producing food and feed and enhancing livelihoods. The Nile BDC is a consortium between various actors in Ethiopia led by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI).

One of the main objectives of the Nile BDC is to facilitate an institutional structure for joint learning and exchange between different actors working on land and water management in Ethiopia at the national level. In close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Nile BDC aims to establish a broad based multi-stakeholder platform that would allow knowledge sharing and joint planning across institutions and organizations in alignment with the AGP of the Ethiopian government. The national innovation platform intends to serve as a basis for improving interactions between key players, projects, and networks working on improved land, water and rainwater management, to identify barriers and opportunities, and develop strategies of addressing those challenges and to create an enabling institutional and policy environment.

Recognizing the vibrant and dynamic activities already taking place in land and water management in the Nile Basin, representatives from ministries, regional bureaus, research institutions, universities, NGOs/CBOs, networks, donors, and the private sector were invited for an orientation workshop to establish a national platform organized by Nile BDC at the ILRI Campus on the 8th of April. About 50 people representing a diversity of organizations at the national level participated. Through presentations of some major projects and networks and reactions from others, participants worked in groups to define the key elements of a national innovation platform: i.e. vision and scope of the platform, its functions and modalities, the role of communication, how to engage policymakers, as well as key topics and issues that need to be included.

It was suggested that the Nile BDC would establish a working group with individuals of major players and networks to work out the details and to plan the next platform meeting. It is the idea that the national platform will meet three times a year to enhance sharing and learning, improve coordination, and be more effective in engaging policy.

See annex 1 and 2 for agenda of workshop and participant list respectively.

1. General Introduction

The workshop was opened by H.E. Tekalign Mamo, State Minister and Advisor to the Minister, MoA, Federal Republic of Ethiopia; in his opening speech H.E. referred to the sectoral division between water and land and to the dispersed available knowledge. A national platform on land and water management is late by 10 years, and hence he welcomes the initiative by the Nile BDC. The ministry will commit itself to support the platform.

After the opening speech, Nadja Manning, the facilitator of the day, gave a short overview of the program of the day (see annex 1 for a detailed program), before she asked everyone to shortly present him or herself, and to express what he/she would be able to contribute. Almost 50 participants (see annex 2) introduced themselves and names of organizations were written down on a poster (see photo 1).



The introductions provided a good overview of the diversity of organizations active in land and water management in the Nile Basin; it covered government organizations, ministries, NGOs, CBOs, research institutes, universities, international research organizations, private sectors, etc; and it covered both organizations who had key projects in the area or which are were engaged in more network type activities for sharing and learning. At the same time, some indicated that the following organizations were missing: organizations focusing on women, Parliament, Sustainable Land Use Forum (SLUF), Private sector, UNICEF, Horn of Africa, other professional associations, SWHISH, donors, youth (ministry of youth and sport), women.

Photo 1: Poster with organizations presented

2. The Nile Basin Development Challenge

Dr. Tilahun Amede gave a presentation introducing the Nile BDC (<http://mahider.ilri.org/handle/10568/3461>) and its relation with the CGIAR Challenge Program of Water and Food (CPWF). He indicated that the Nile BDC is structured in five projects: 1) Learning about rainwater management systems; 2) integrating technologies,

policies and institutions; 3) targeting and scaling out of rainwater management; 4) assessing and anticipating the consequences of innovation in rainwater management systems; and 5) Catalyzing platforms for learning, communication and coordination. Finally, he emphasized the need for a platform for various institutions to work together, and its implications for the bigger Nile.

3. Projects and networks

To initiate a discussion on establishing a platform on land and water management in the Nile Basin, five key project/networks were asked to present themselves in fifteen minutes; the following organizations/networks were selected:

- Sustainable land management and the Ethiopian Strategic Investment Framework – by Daniel Danano, SLMP Coordinator at the Ministry of Agriculture
<http://mahider.ilri.org/handle/10568/3465>
- CRDA Water and Sanitation Forum – by Adane Kassa, Forum Deputy Chairman
<http://mahider.ilri.org/handle/10568/3508>
- The Potential of Ethiopian bamboo development and future cooperation with other development partners – by Melaku Tadesse at the Ministry of Agriculture
<http://mahider.ilri.org/handle/10568/3510>
- Forum for Environment (FfE) – Negusu Aklilu, Director of the Forum
<http://mahider.ilri.org/handle/10568/3518>
- The Role of cooperation in higher education for development – Prof. Mitiku Haile, President of Mekelle University
<http://mahider.ilri.org/handle/10568/3509>

They were asked to focus their presentation on the following aspects: who they are/what are their objectives, what do they do, with whom they work, with lessons they have learned so far, what are their main challenges and what are their future plans. In addition to the invited presentations, there were some others who shared their experiences:

- RiPPLE Ethiopia by Zemedu Abebe: key topics for RiPPLE are Water and Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Multiple Use of Water Systems (MUS); they work at three different levels (i.e. themes → research → policy engagement) using learning and practice alliances; action research is carried out for setting agendas and develop research agendas; RiPPLE produces practical working papers and other outputs, which are shared at different levels; they involve communities; they are hosted by MoWR → National forum; they have a steering committee to set agenda

- Ethiopian Economic Association: they are involved in various activities, ranging from research, training, publications, forums, and policy advice; they also provide an internship program in economics and seminars (International conference, share research) and contribute to distribution (e.g. mailing list, take outputs to universities- free of charge) and have regional chapters

Some ideas that emerged were:

- Need to bringing people together at similar levels (Keep people comfortable, consider language, capacity)
- It was noted that there is a gap of middle-level professionals
- Practical attachment projects (Mekelle University)
- Involving schools and the youth

4. Why a platform

After lunch, Kees Swaans from ILRI gave a presentation on “a national platform on land and water management in the Nile Basin: why do we need one?”

(<http://mahider.ilri.org/handle/10568/3456>). He gave an overview of emerging challenges in land and water management in the Nile Basin and the relevance of innovation.

Innovation is a process refers to technical, organizational, institutional and policy changes; hence it involved multiple actors working together. A platform is a mechanism to stimulate interaction and to improve coordination, sharing and learning, and create institutional change. Often platforms are part of a learning alliance which refers to a learning network operating at different scales, and which offers opportunities for out and up-scaling of best practices and lessons learned.

After the presentation there was a short discussion whether there was actually a need for a platform; although there seems a generally felt feeling that better coordination and sharing and learning are important, many were hesitant. Many wanted guidance in terms of how to establish and maintain a platform; some also questioned whether a platform without resources and a lead organization would be viable. It was mentioned that the Nile BDC would initially play a leading role and could provide some start-up resources, but at the same time it should not be a platform run and driven by Nile BDC alone; other organizations have to step in and contribute. In the long term the platform should be sustainable without external funding.

The facilitator wrote down various key issues that were mentioned during the discussion:

- Who to run it? Facilitation Resources?
- Sustainability-how? Continuity?

- Benefits
- Who to be involved – how and when?
- What roles?
- Institutional Learning Alliance → What levels/layers? - National/Regional?
Operational alliance?
- Scaling out + up of technology
- Research-Policy interface
- Strategy
- Sustainability of elements: → for how long? (Financial, Institutional)
- What issues? Platform for what?
- Who are our consumers/clients?

It was clarified that we mainly refer to a national platform; the workshop is not about establishing local innovation platforms or regional platforms.

5. Establishing a platform

After the presentation of ‘why a platform is needed’ and the subsequent discussion, participants were asked to work in groups on the following topics in relation to the establishment of a national platform: 1) vision & objectives; 2) function and modalities; 3) communication; 4) policy and other engagement; 5) key topics and issues to be included. Participants were numbered to ensure that type of organizations would be distributed over the groups; after 40 minutes, participants had the opportunity to switch another topic (although in practice this hardly seems to have happened). Key ideas were presented on posters.



Photo 2: *Participants working in small groups*

5.1 Vision and objectives

The overall vision formulated was:¹

“Healthy, sustainable, and equitable use and management of natural resources for improved productivity, livelihoods and ecosystem services in Ethiopia (in general and Nile Basin in particular)”

The formulation of the vision gave rise to a lengthy discussion in plenary; key discussion points focused on the following aspects:

- Formulation: some argued that the vision should be brief and short, and just refer to the ultimate goal, not to the way how to get there; others however did not agree with that as the way how to get there is part and parcel of the vision itself.
- Scale: as the platform is a national platform, some argue that we should refer to Ethiopia as a whole in the vision; some, however, feel that it is better to focus on the Nile Basin as the Nile BDC will be one of the lead organizations in the platform; another option may be to focus initially on the Nile Basin, but leave the platform open for others – beyond the Nile Basin – to participate as well.
- Time-bound: some questioned whether the vision should be time-bound; others however argued that this is not part of the vision, but could be integrated in the objectives

The objectives were stated as:

- Improve sectoral integration, communication and cross-institutional learning
- Create (demand driven) capacity at national levels in research, development, academia and policy development
- To improve access to knowledge intervention and finance
- Facilitate functional market links and value-added production systems

Questions/issues raised in plenary were:

- We need to define with what we mean with concepts as ‘sectoral’ and ‘capacity’

¹ During the discussion that led to the vision and objectives, various key issues were mentioned as important to take into account: i.e. sector integration, improving productivity, creating capacity/knowledge, proper land use management, irrigation efficiency, pressure on NR –natural/manmade, poor extension, capital limitations, conflict management and rights, demand-driven research, weak coordination, scales/participation, research capacity, policy gaps, enforcement, legalization, communication/information flow, multiple use of water, technology + (SWC) for water productivity, functional markets; they also talked about who the target groups were, although this was not presented in plenary; target groups mentioned were: policy makers – MoA, MoWR, Parlam-GOs/Council of ministers, and like-minded organizations, i.e. research/academia; NGOs/CBOs, bilateral/Multi lateral organizations, donors, private sector.

- The platform's main focus is on knowledge and information sharing; it is not meant for direct intervention and action – although it could lead to it; therefore one can question whether it should directly facilitate function market links and value-added prosecution system; however, it could do so by providing an enabling environment for it.

5.2 Function and modalities

As main *functions* of the platform were mentioned:

- Knowledge generation and sharing (knowledge management)
- Bring about synergy across-sectors-and urban and rural sector Land & Water Management, food security & livelihood issues
- Information for policy makers-creating an interface between practitioners and policy makers (e.g. through policy briefs)
- Linkage creation for information sharing- create space for dialogue
- Coordination amongst partners working in the sector
- Serving as stepping stone for the formation of regional platforms

The group added that it did not want to go too much into issues of policy engagement and communication as these issues were to be presented by other groups.

The group suggested the following *modalities*:

- Steering committee & thematic area composed of few willing organizations
- To have timeline & modalities
- Terms of reference (TOR) for the platform (i.e. structure: chairman, etc.)
- Open for any relevant organization working in the water and land sector
- Integrated/participatory monitoring & evaluation (M&E): to check the platform is working in the right direction

There seemed overall consensus among participants about the functions and modalities. One issue raised in plenary was that it is not clear when we talk about steering committee whether we refer to an official group with high profile people, or more a working groups with representatives who have time to devote themselves to the establishment and functioning of the platform; someone suggested that it would be good to sign a MOU between those who take part in this group to create institutional commitment

5.3 Communication

The group indicated that they first had a discussion on what communication is and why it is needed; they described it as:

“Transfer of knowledge, best practices and challenges, from local to national level and vice versa, and horizontally among organizations and actors in general (for informing, engaging, and learning)”

Several questions can be asked in relation to communication, i.e. to whom do we communicate, how do we communicate, and who (internal) communicates; issues mentioned by the group were:

5.3.1 Communicating to whom:

- Local actors, e.g. key partners, administrations, government organizations, cooperatives, NGO, CBO, etc. (i.e. best practices and lessons learned)
- Policy makers
- National and international knowledge institutions
- Others (e.g. larger society)

5.3.2 Communicate how?

- Newsletters/briefs/e-mail
- Radio/TV
- Focal points/Secretariat
- Website
- Magazine
- Policy brief/invite policy maker
- Manuals/packages

5.3.3 Who (internal) communicates?

- Someone needs to be responsible (e.g. someone from the facilitation group)
- It may help to make separate Work groups around certain (action- research) topics; this will help to structure communication/information
- Internal people also responsible for seeking information

People seem to agree with most of the issues mentioned; it was suggested to initiate a common e-mail address for platform members to be established by the Nile BDC.

5.4 Policy engagement

The group who worked on policy issues raised several issues that need to be considered:

- What is policy?
- Nile is much bigger than Ethiopia – trans-boundary issues; does this platform go beyond Ethiopia; NBDC is restricted to Nile basin of Ethiopia.
- Platform provides a link between field experiences & national stakeholders e.g. policy makers.
- Look at existing policy. Look at what needs to be changed; existing water resources policy is outdated e.g. does not consider climate change.
- Not just about policy but also about implementation- what can platform do here?
- Policy considerations need to be about much more than rainwater harvesting etc – about holistic landscape management; need to integrate land & water issues; need to integrate NRM with livelihood aspects.
- How to influence policy makers? –need some concrete data info e.g. literature, substantial research findings, e.g. info on likely impacts of climate change; need action research to provide evidence base; platform could be useful to showcase evidence that RWM strategies in Ethiopia are not necessarily harmful to downstream countries.
- Engage policy makers early so they are sensitized; Policy makers are busy-but need to engage experts; Even if they are not present at platforms- use communication media to influence them.
- Encourage public discourse.
- Need to think widely about which policies to influence e.g. curriculum development.
- Need to ask policy makers what they need to know.
- Platform should engage in confidence building that RWM interventions are not harmful in Ethiopia.
- Need to debate relative merits of large scale versus small scale irrigation.

One remark was made from the audience that it is indeed important to find out what policy makers want to know, but we also need to be aware of the planning cycles and ‘room for maneuver’ for adapt/change policies.

5.5 Key topics and issues to be included

Several key topics and issues were identified that need attention when establishing a platform:

- Institutionalization (Recognition/legalization; sustainability related to finance)

- Sense of ownership (Lack of equal participation; lack of commitment)
- Monitoring & Evaluation (Lack of proper follow-up; lack of proper evaluation)
- Impartiality (equal benefit; equal contribution)
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (responsibility)
- Representation (Key staff)
- Incentives & subsidies



Photo 3: *Brainstorm on key issues and topics*

In addition to the key areas (water & land), the following issues were mentioned that need to taken into account:

- Cross-cutting issues i.e. gender, micro-finance, policy issues
- Population growth versus likelihood
- Urbanization
- Trans-boundary issues
- Flexibility to consider emerging issues
- Step-wise approach
- Review of experiences

There was some discussion whether the platform should be formal, registered or recognized; there has been evidence that platforms that become formalized often become less effective.

6 Way forward and conclusion

Dr. Tilahun Amede, leader of the Nile BDC, discussed the way forward in plenary.

- There was a commonly felt need for guidance and that the Nile BDC would take the lead, while on the other hand the organizers of the workshop wanted to hear the perceptions and ideas of people and organizations who are active in land and water management in the Nile Basin around the establishment of a national platform. Based on the discussion during the workshop, it was suggested to establish a working group which will take the ideas which were generated during the workshop forward. Some may already have signed in on a voluntary subscription list
- He also raised the discussion how often the platform should meet; there seem to be an agreement that 3 times a year would be sufficient; although initially there may be more meetings to initiate the platform and to ensure its functioning.

Finally, the workshop was closed by Dr. Tilahun Amede; he promised that participants would receive a report of the workshop.

Annex 1: Agenda NBDC Platform Planning workshop, 8th April 2011 (ILRI Campus, Addis Ababa)

| Theme | Time | Activity |
|--|-------------|---|
| | 9:00 | Welcome and Introduction to day |
| Getting to know each other (individuals) | 9:15–9:30 | Individual introductions |
| Getting to know the NBDC | 9:30–10:00 | Presentation on the NBDC |
| | 10.00–10.30 | Refreshment break |
| Getting to know experiences of projects and networks | 10:30–11:30 | Projects and networks present |
| | 11:30–12:00 | Learning about other activities and experiences |
| | 12:00–1:30 | LUNCH |
| Exploring establishment of a platform | 1:30–2:00 | Discussing WHY a platform |
| | 2:00–3:30 | Establishing the HOW for a platform |
| | 3:30–4:00 | Refreshment break |
| Proposals and moving forward | 4:00–4:45 | Presentation and Synthesis of groupwork |
| | 4:45–5:00 | Way Forward and Closing |

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